

Interview with Lawrence J. Hall

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Information Series

LARWENCE J. HALL

Interviewed by: Hans Tuch

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Q: Hans Tuch is interviewing Larry Hall on August 23, 1988, in his home in Bethesda, Maryland. Good Morning.

HALL: Good morning. How are you?

Bio Sketch

Q: Let me just introduce this conversation by stating that Larry was born in Jersey City in 1920. After attending university at NYU and the University of Wisconsin, he got his start in journalism in Idaho, in Twin Falls, Idaho, with the Twin Falls Times-News.

In the late '40s, he found himself in Europe and that is where he got started with what later became public diplomacy, working with the U.S. Government. I think we might as well start by asking you, Larry, how did you get into this work?

What was it that brought you into the whole area of public diplomacy?

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HALL: Well, at that time, in 1948, I had been in Paris for a year and a half and was working for the International News Service as the overnight editor, which is the bottom echelon in the overseas news coverage pile, and making not much money.

1948: Entry Into U.S. Government Information Work
With the Economic Cooperation Administration

I heard that the Economic Cooperation Administration (Marshall Plan) officials had arrived in Paris and were looking for writers to join their information staff. I went to see Al Friendly, who then was the Chief of Information for ECA in all of Europe. His was a department in the Office of the Special Representative, which was Governor Harriman's headquarters and separate from the ECA Mission to France.

We were housed in that wonderful Hotel Talleyrand in Paris and later the Information Branch had the old tennis club in Avenue Gabrielle, in the part opposite the American Embassy and right next to the Martigny theater.

I was interviewed by Wally Nielsen, who was deputy to Al Friendly and by Al. Soon thereafter, I was hired. First, Al went to see my boss at INS, Joe Kingsbury Smith, to make sure that he was not pirating me away without Joe's knowledge.

I went to work as an Assistant Writer-Editor, FSS-9 which was slightly lower than a good secretary rating.

Q: This was in 1948?

HALL: '48, that is right. I went to work for the News and Writing Branch. Al Friendly headed up the whole operation which included a division called Special Media. That was radio, exhibits, motion pictures, pamphlets and research.

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We did not have a Television Branch, but motion pictures were under Lothar Wolfe and Stuart Shulberel. Frank Norall headed Special Media, which included some very talented people newly arrived from the United States to run these things. They knew little about economics or the Marshall Plan and very little about Europe, but a great deal about the media from which they came.

I went into the News and Writing Branch headed by Bill Auman, whose deputy was Sid Fine — both came eventually to USIA. The two others in the Division were myself and Dan Madden, who came from a Phoenix newspaper.

I was responsible for covering about half of the operating divisions of OSR including finance, industry, agriculture — operations that were headed by outstanding American businessmen and industrialists who kept track of their areas of activity in Marshall Plan Missions in eighteen countries of Europe.

Q: The type of work that you did in the Information Division, was it primarily designed to publicize the United States contribution to the Marshall — I mean, what we were doing in Europe at that time, to publicize for the European media?

HALL: Yes, it was, in good measure. It also flowed back to the United States since we had no restriction such as USIA does. So we also worked to inform the American people of what the Marshall Plan was doing.

I found very quickly after I got into this job that many of the information people knew little about the Marshall Plan. I started very quickly to read everything that two men wrote.

One was Paul Hoffman, who headed the ECA in Washington and the other was my senior boss, Averell Harriman. Both of them made quite a few speeches. By reading these speeches, which came out two or three times a week, I began to know what we were trying to do. Since few others were reading these speeches, I became the fountainhead for

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policy in the Department. Later Tom Wilson was sent over to become policy officer. He is now a public affairs specialist in Washington.

One of our functions in News and Writing was to write general magazine-type stories that could be used by our information officers in the eighteen countries where we had Marshall plan operations to feed to the local press and/or send back to Marshall Plan Headquarters in Washington where they provided material for distribution to the press.

I did a series of articles on what the Marshall Plan was doing in Belgium, spending two weeks there. I also did some articles on operations in France.

After about six or eight months, I was asked if I wanted to become the idea man and chief writer for the Exhibits Branch. Since it seemed something new and different, I did that, working for the Exhibits chief, Peter Harndon.

Q: Oh, yes, of course. ECA at that time was almost a separate department of the government. In other words, you did not respond to policy at the State Department, right?

HALL: That is right, at least not directly. Undoubtedly policy was coordinated in Washington.

Q: You had more or less your own policy and operational establishment?

HALL: Yes, but only insofar as there was no specific policy guidance to our Information Division. It was completely derivative. We made it up as we went along, by interpreting public speeches or by contact with the operating divisions.

Q: The reason I asked that is because before USIA was created and many of the people who worked in ECA in the information area at that time, later, like yourself, joined USIA. But, at that time, parallel to what you were doing in the information field, there were embassy press attach#s and embassy operation officers.

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Lee Brady was involved for the State Department doing the parallel kind of a job; is that correct?

HALL: That is correct. In fact, one of the articles I did as a freelancer, even before I went to work for INS in Paris, was a story about USIS-Paris as it existed in 1947 and early '48, because someone had told me that the budget for this part of the State Department had been very seriously cut in late 1947 and Paris-USIS had to determine what it would have to give up.

I decided to go through the entire USIS-Paris establishment and ask the various officers what the cuts meant. In so doing, I learned something about their operations and the significance of a USIS post in a Western European country.

Q: Tangentially, do you still have any of that material?

HALL: Probably. I am not sure I have that one. I may have.

Q: It would be very interesting as a contribution to this history.

HALL: I never thought of that. Yes, it would. I eventually used it to reinforce my case to get a job with ECA by sending it along to Al Friendly after our interview.

I am trying to think of the name of the then-PAO who later became CAO, a very distinguished guy. (The man in question was Doug Schneider.)

Q: Yes, I think Lee Brady mentioned him, because Lee was working for him at that time, I believe, in Lyon.

HALL: Yes, that's right.

Q: He was the French Public Affairs Officer.

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HALL: I interviewed the librarian and the PAO and the CAO and several other officers. The radio man there also was quite a legendary character, Simon Copans. Sim already had a little studio that he was using not only to create VOA programs, but he had a regular program on RDF, French National Radio, discussing and playing American folk music and jazz. He started that program shortly after V-E Day.

Q: So, how long did you do that kind of work? How long were you with ECA?

1950: Hall Leaves ECA Headquarters, Paris, for ECA Operations Mission, Turkey

HALL: I was with ECA-OSR until October 1950. I had become bored with working at what I regarded as the headquarters and wanted to go out to the field — one of the 18 Missions. I made such a request to Wally Nielsen.

Wally said, “Even Turkey?” and I said, “Even Turkey”. It was considered the least European country in the European recovery program. So, I went off to Turkey as Assistant Information Officer, the Information Officer being the top of our little operation.

Q: Still ECA?

HALL: Still ECA, yes, but called the U.S. Operations Mission to Turkey.

Q: Still ECA to Turkey?

HALL: Yes.

Q: You worked?

HALL: For Tom Flanagan who was the PIO, as we called him.

Q: Public Information Officer?

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HALL: Right.

Q: For ECA Turkey?

HALL: Which was the Marshall Plan mission to Turkey, right. It had its own establishment and its own building was quite separate from the Embassy and from USIS as well.

In fact, when I say “completely separate from the embassies”, there is a little bit of humor there because in the early days of the Marshall Plan, the ministers who were the heads of the Marshall Plan missions were frequently disliked by the heads of the regular diplomatic missions.

Q: Because they had the money?

HALL: Because they had the money and many of the government ministers broke a trail to their offices and ignored the embassies.

Q: I see.

HALL: So, Ruth and I and our infant son went to Turkey in October of 1950 and I worked there for almost three years, both as assistant to Tom and eventually as acting Information Officer when Tom was sent on a couple of special assignments.

He became one of the few people in either USIS or the Marshall Plan Information Operations to hold jobs in both organization. This was done with a view to the eventual amalgamating of these services. Tom was made PAO-Turkey and our Information Officer in London, Joe Phillips, was made PAO-London.

In any case, in Turkey we practically ran our own shop, occasionally asking for help from USIS or offering it and making suggestions from time to time — for VOA coverage of

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Marshall Plan activities, for instance. We were not invited to attend USIS staff meetings or anything like that.

We knew all the USIS people. We worked with them individually but there was no attempt to integrate the policies. We knew our policies. The Marshall Plan was very clear-cut. We were trying to accomplish certain economic goals and also to make people aware of American aid and what it was doing.

1953: Marshall Plan Phases Out; Hall Joins Newly Created USIA As Public Affairs Officer, Beirut

When it became obvious we were going out of business and an independent USIA would be born, I wrote a letter to Ned Nordness in OSR Paris, an acquaintance of mine who was working on the effort to transfer some of us from the Marshall Plan into the new organization.

I told him that if I survived the sorting out, I wanted to be a Deputy PAO in a large post or a PAO in a small post. In about a month, a cable came in saying, "Report to Beirut, September 17th."

Q: This was 1953?

HALL: 1953, right.

Q: So, you were in on the creation of USIA?

HALL: That is right. I was the first PAO under USIA.

Q: In Beirut?

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HALL: In Beirut. When we arrived there, the former PAO had already been let out and Mildred Vardaman, the CAO and a wonderful person, was the acting PAO. Mildred took charge right away and took charge of me.

There were, I think about eight or nine officers out on the tarmac to meet me when we arrived. Half of them had RIF notices in their pockets, since this was a time of changeover. Tom Sorensen was there and he was my Information Officer. Tom later was appointed Deputy Director of the Agency by the Kennedy Administration.

Q: Tom was already in the service at that time?

HALL: He was, yes. He came in when USIS was under State. I think he had been there for a year, maybe a year and a half.

1955: Baghdad - Followed by Series of Assignments In Washington and Morocco

(Ed. Note: Evidently Mr. Hall felt the assignment in Baghdad, followed by a Washington tour, then Rabat, Morocco, and a second Washington Assignment did not produce enough of significance to cover in this interview. The assignments in India, Iran, and Vietnam are dealt with in the balance of this interview.)

Q: Well, you know, from then on, you obviously went from post to post as PAO and served in Washington. I know there are three particular assignments that you have had over the years that I believe, for this project, for this purpose, are particularly interesting.

The first one of these was in Iran, where you spent two years from 1966 to '68. I think that your experiences there would be very pertinent. Were you the PAO?

HALL: I was PAO. I arrived there in February 1966. I had been the Acting PAO in India for seven months prior to that.

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1964: Deputy Public Affairs Officer, India

Q: I'm sorry. Let me go back one step. Let's start with India, because you were in India from 1964 to 1966.

HALL: Yes.

Q: So, really, let's start with your assignment in India where you were the Deputy PAO.

HALL: Yes. That's right. I was deputy to Bill Weathersby who was a friend from the Middle East. He had been PAO in Cairo when I was PAO in Beirut and Baghdad. I volunteered for that assignment because Bill was there.

I arrived on the day of Nehru's funeral. So, since the entire establishment — American as well as our Indian employees — were turned to for that funeral, I was quickly hustled into someone's house and told to sit quiet for forty-eight hours until called for. Then I joined the USIS staff at Bahawalpur House. I was the deputy for the biggest, at that time, USIS establishment anywhere in the world.

Q: I was going to say, at that time, it was the largest?

HALL: At that time.

Q: Of course, part of its being so large was because it was able to spend a lot of local currency.

HALL: Yes, indeed. The rupee account was huge but we did have sixty-five American employees and several hundred Indian employees.

It was my first experience with a huge operation in which most of the authority had to be delegated to Information Officers and Cultural Officers and especially to Branch PAOs,

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since the branch posts, the three main ones in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, each had ten American officers.

Nehru was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri, an elderly man and a saintly type. It was a time when Lyndon Johnson was carefully meting out the amount of food aid that was vital to India's survival and which amounted to millions and millions of tons of grain.

The President was not very sympathetic to the neutralist foreign policy of India and especially unhappy with the criticism of the Vietnam War and his conduct of it, that the Indians were constantly voicing.

Therefore, he reacted by holding them on a very tight leash as far as our food aid was concerned, much to the consternation of Ambassador Chester Bowles, who had been appointed by President Kennedy as the result of power politics within the Kennedy Administration.

Q: Right, because Kennedy wanted to get rid of Bowles out of the State Department where he had been the Under Secretary and sent him to India.

HALL: That's right.

Q: He was your Ambassador during you entire time there?

HALL: That's right, he was. He was a good friend, too. Of course, he was very sympathetic not only with Indians but with the Third World generally and the problems of its emergence into the 20th Century.

He never really gave up the idea that he should have been Secretary of State and, therefore, he acted like a Secretary of State and kept the Secretary of State and the White House advised of everything that it should do on a global basis.

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Q: It seems that our Ambassadors to India have had that proclivity. I mean, here was Kenneth Galbraith who was his predecessor, wasn't he?

HALL: Successor.

Q: I remember the telegrams that Kenneth Galbraith sent back. No, he was the predecessor because he sent back telegrams for Ed Murrow and I was working for Ed Murrow, you know, criticizing the wireless file and everything else that we did.

HALL: Yes, yes, you are right.

Q: Okay. Running a huge operation like USIS India must have been a tremendous operational burden and a tremendous policy, great policy problems, and what all did we do there at that time?

HALL: Amazingly enough, USIS India was traditionally one of the best operated posts and had the best system of internal communications. I am a bug on the need for good internal communications in order to properly run both USIA and its posts in the field. I felt we had an excellent system there.

We did profit from having direct teletype connections with our major branch posts. In addition to that, Bill and I visited those posts often and we had officers coming in to Delhi from them constantly.

Q: Who were at that time your primary target groups in India?

HALL: The young people in the universities we regarded as possibly the most important, since they would constitute the leadership within a very short time. Our University Program was one that I think was probably imitated in many other USIS posts.

Q: Did that include academic exchanges?

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HALL: It did include academic exchanges and it included sending teams of Americans — visiting academics and other specialists, U.S. government people, our officers or Ford Foundation people or any qualified American who was a good public speaker — to go out to a specific university and spend several days there, holding seminars and meeting students and faculty members. There were, at that time, I think four hundred universities in India. With the teams we sent young Americans to hold bull sessions with the students. This program was enormously successful because the team members offered only friendship and their experience.

These teams would go out and spend a week, live at the university. They would have been previously scheduled by our branch post or cultural division officers to give any number of talks, hold seminars and then especially we would bring our young people with us, put them in the dormitory with the students and they would hold bull sessions with students nightly. That plus lectures and meetings with faculty members. It was a multi-media interdisciplinary full, holistic approach to intercultural relations.

Q: With lots of personal contact.

HALL: With lots of personal contact and many questions and answers.

Q: Did you have a Fulbright Program?

HALL: We had a huge Fulbright Program that was separate but closely integrated with our operation through our cultural programs, such as the University Programs mentioned earlier. Happily we had one of the few cultural attach#s who were political appointees, hand picked in this case by Chester Bowles. He was expert in his own discipline, but could also adapt to the demands and constraints of a government organization. His name was Robert R. R. Brooks. He had been Dean at Williams College and an economist in his own right. He could and did lecture on four or five subjects, a true Renaissance man.

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Q: What were your main media products at that time in India?

HALL: In India we had a magazine called Span, which annually in competition with the scores of Indian magazines won awards for the best typography and lay-out and also for its editorial content, as well. That was sent to the elite on our list because its cost was high. I think it was restricted to about twenty-five thousand copies.

Our large publication was a news periodical called The Reporter, which we did in six languages — English and five Indian languages — and I think its circulation was four hundred thousand and that was, I think, a monthly or perhaps a fortnightly.

Q: You just answered that question in part. Were your products mostly in the vernacular languages or mostly in English? There has always been this dichotomy with our PAOs in India. Should we primarily work with the English language or should we try to communicate in the vernacular?

HALL: We continued the debate and it was always a good debate worth continuing, to keep us on our toes. We actually did about half our emphasis in English and about half in the vernacular languages, which were so important. Language, as you know, is a tremendous political force in India and a very divisive and very sensitive one.

Riots can start in which fifty people are killed over the question of whether or not English should be a second official language in that part of the country.

Q: The reason I asked the question is even later, when I was at VOA, there was always the discussion on whether we should strengthen our broadcasts in the vernacular, in Hindi, Bengali and, of course, we also, towards Pakistan, we had Urdu. Hindi and Bengali were the only languages we were broadcasting and the BBC was broadcasting in other vernacular languages.

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The then-PAO felt, "Forget about the vernaculars. Just concentrate on English." We did not agree. That question was not really resolved until after Iran became a major issue and the hostages were taken.

Suddenly, VOA was instructed, "Go into Farsi. Go into Pushtu. Go into Azari. Obviously, also, strengthen our Bengali and Hindi services."

HALL: That, of course, and the timing of it — to divert a minute — I think it was in part a reflection, even a subconscious one, of the fact that we had obviously in our policies toward Iran failed to contact this large and unseen population of people influenced by the Mullahs throughout the country in small towns who only spoke the local language, whatever it was.

1966: Country Public Affairs Officer, Iran

Q: Let's go into Iran, where you were from 1966 to 1968 as PAO after India and, of course, this was still during a time when our relationship with the Shah was very close. Did we have a big program in Iran at that time?

HALL: It was quite big, yes. At the time, we still had branch posts, one-man posts, in Isfahan, Mashed, Khorramshahr and in Shiraz. We had a Tehran staff of about a dozen Americans.

It was a time of transition from that very close relationship that the U.S. had had for perhaps ten years before when we were more than just close to the government. We were actually running it to a degree, but that had largely disappeared before my time.

I am afraid it was rather a badly thought out policy that permitted us to do that.

Q: This was in the early '60s?

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HALL: This was in the early '60s and late '50s. In my day under Ambassador Armin Meyer his policy was to get away from that close association and to make certain that our Iranian friends understood that we were not making decisions for Iran any longer and wanted to have the same type of correct relationship we would have with any other country. This was sometimes difficult to do because there was a generation of older Iranian officials and sub-officials who almost thought they had to come to the American embassy when they were looking for a job or a promotion.

It began to be understood and, of course, the Shah began early on to assert his independence. In fact, in some ways, his independence was a part of his egocentricity and his mania for building up his military forces and regarding Iran as the keystone of Western military might as well as a strong stable force in the shaky Middle East.

Q: How did the PAO in Iran interact with his ambassador — in this case, Armin Meyer, right?

HALL: Very closely. Armin and I were old friends from Beirut days. Armin kept his own counsel to a good degree. He nonetheless was open to argument and discussion.

Q: Was he interested and involved in public diplomacy?

HALL: Interested but not involved to a great degree. He was not a gifted public speaker himself, although he was quite adequate when called upon.

This was a time when we were withdrawing from a position of being too closely associated with influencing the government. We wanted to lower our profile in all ways, so our touch was a delicate one in our relations with the Iranians.

Q: Was his conception of his job, say, as a delegate, as a representative, did it include the area of public diplomacy or did he believe in political-economic security work, did his own conception of his job include public diplomacy?

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HALL: It was not among his tools for achieving policy ends. He was politically sensitive and felt that the political aspect was the most important. I think he probably was right since we were operating in a closed society, with no real political opposition and tight control of media.

He was always available when called upon. Probably the most useful operation we had in public diplomacy was our binational center which, during the time I was there, multiplied in size enormously largely because the city government of Tehran decided, after having it under review for years, to make a grant of land to us to build a new binational center.

We had been holding in reserve a couple of million dollars for this purpose, so the building rapidly went up and became a very interesting, intercultural center and probably our most effective tool there.

Q: How about your relationship with USIA in Washington? Did they give you the support that you needed? I do not know about the area director. This was a period when the area directors, so to speak, in the scheme of things, were riding high. In other words —

HALL: They were still riding high, yes.

Q: There were always these various changes. In some administrations, it was the area directors who were the sort of principal officers under the director. At other times, it was the media person, the media director, who ran the agency and not the areas.

This was a period when I think that the area directors were riding high.

HALL: I agree. I think that actually the area directors — there may have been minor changes — but right from Ted Streibert, the first Agency Director, right into Frank Shakespeare's day, the area directors were still very strong. I think until that time they were even second guessing the Personnel Division on assignments.

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Q: Right, right.

HALL: That was a big element of strength. And they also defended the field budgets before Congress, included a great deal of media support.

Alan Carter was the area director at the time. In the last year of my term there, he became a pain in the neck because he was constantly asking me to do things that I had done two months before.

While his main point in all this was a very good one, it was something that I had anticipated and worked on and that was a shift away from information activities toward more cultural activities and the shift away from more slots being allocated to information to a situation where our cultural staff was, by far, the larger element. Obviously this kind of emphasis was needed in a closed society with little media freedom.

Q: That was also during the time when Leonard Marks was the director and really quite sympathetic to cultural and exchange activities and certainly libraries and things like that.

HALL: He was and although Leonard never visited Iran during the two years I was there, Alan did a few times. We had a mixed kind of staff. It was not ideal and I am not sure I was the ideal person to head it, either. As it worked out, I got very poor marks for my personnel relationships when Hew Ryan and his team inspected me.

We really had a strange staff — if it were not tragic, it would be pretty funny. We had a films officer who tried to steal very valuable equipment when he was leaving on reassignment and was only caught when my excellent deputy, Brian Bell, insisted that his lift van be opened up. He was fired a short time thereafter.

We had as a press officer a garrulous, sodden cast-off from the Point Four Information staff, a man who had been a small town reporter for years before he got the job, knew very

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little about the outside world, loved alcohol, drank it on the job, was usually too plastered to work, and almost had no sensitivity toward what he was doing.

His boss, who shall be nameless, since he is dead — should he be nameless?

Q: Yes, maybe in this case.

HALL: He was a pleasant man.

Q: He was the Information Officer?

HALL: He was the Information Officer, who had served long and well in a Washington job, especially for IPS where he was a reporter and covered major government elements. The reward for all that long service was to put him out as Information Officer in a country where he was not needed and where he did not know what to do.

His constant slogan was, "The Way I run my shop is to get good men and let them have their head." Unfortunately he had only one good man (a woman) and he was inept as an administrator.

1968: Transfer To Vietnam as Deputy Director JUSPAO

Q: Things may have even gone downhill from there when you went to Vietnam in 1968 and spent two years in Vietnam. What was your job there?

HALL: I was the Deputy Director of JUSPAO (Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office) and for a great deal of the time I was the acting director, since Ed Nickel was frequently away.

Q: This was during Ed Nickel's time?

HALL: Yes, I volunteered for Vietnam. Alan Carter said I could stay on the job in Iran as long as I wanted to, but I wanted to be out from under his thumb, for one thing, and I also

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had had no war experience of my own and while this looked like a sad case for a war, I decided I should know first hand what war was like.

I told Dan Oleksiw, who was the area director for the Far East and an old friend of mine, that I would go out there but I would only do it if Ed Nickel completely consented and wanted me there.

Dan lied to me, as he is sometimes wont to do, so Ed Nickel was rather chagrined that he had to let go of Keith Adamson in order for me to take the job. As I say, I got along very well with Ed because he had a high regard for tight administration and operation and so did I. He also, once he got to trust me, let me have a free hand in doing pretty much what I wanted to do as long as I kept him informed.

He played the role of keeping the liaison with the embassy, with the mission council, of which he was a member, and the top brass in the military command.

Q: JUSPAO at that time was a very controversial, well, a huge operation and also controversial in terms of USIA. What were your views about our mission there and our job at that particular period?

HALL: Our mission there, of course, was to do whatever we could to try to make the world look with sympathy on our conduct of the war and the fact that we were there at all, an impossible task. We tried to do this in many ways, one of which was providing material for Washington to give to the media. The U.S. official contact with the press in Vietnam was a whole separate operation which was not under JUSPAO's purview at that time.

Q: With the international press?

HALL: There was no other press to speak of since local media was under tight control. We had one project which was hosting visits by PAOs from all over who came in groups for a one-week orientation.

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Q: *I was one of those.*

HALL: You were one of those?

Q: *I think shortly before you got there.*

HALL: Yes.

Q: *JUSPAO at that time also was really doing the information work for the Vietnamese?*

HALL: That is right. Not to the degree that it had been handled in the immediate past, but yes, in terms of psychological warfare operations which we were doing directly with their military PSYOPS (Psychological Operations) programs.

We were also doing our own classified PSYOPS programs, as well, creating the leaflets that we dropped over not only Vietnam but Laos as well.

Q: *Were our efforts, in your own personal view, I would say they were honorable, but were they worthwhile?*

HALL: To a small degree, but then I think all of public diplomacy only weighs in the final balance of support for foreign policy to a small degree. I think it is a legitimate operation even when you measure it in percentages that might range from two to fifteen or twenty.

I do not believe public diplomacy — with certain narrow, very narrow exceptions — is a telling portion of the American government's effort to promulgate special aspects of foreign policy. It supplements negotiation of policy, perhaps creating a more receptive public attitude for it.

Q: *Certainly not in an area where we were so involved with arms with the military, I mean, where possibly I would think maybe public diplomacy has a bigger chance of making a more substantial contribution to our foreign policy process where we are not involved*

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militarily or where we have a relationship that enables us to have an impact on the population in a democratic society or in a developing society.

Would you agree with that?

HALL: Yes, if you define foreign policy very broadly. If you define it narrowly, no. It is a very difficult thing to do, with or without public diplomacy, to change public attitude to favor a specific aspect of foreign policy. Therefore, it is very difficult for public diplomacy to have more than a marginal effect in such cases.

Q: You said earlier that the relationship, the operation with the international press and with the American press was handled separately.

Who did that? Was it also a USIS operation or was it completely outside of the USIS purview?

HALL: In about 1968 — I maybe wrong on the exact date — the then Associated Press correspondent in Saigon found that he was being briefed on the war from the American side by a USIA officer and he asked his organization to protest that, since he felt the function of USIS was to propagandize. He felt that it was the wrong thing for us to be doing.

Q: Who was that?

HALL: I think it was Peter Arnett, the Australian who did such outstanding coverage of the war for AP. I am sure he had a lot of support from other American newsmen. In any case, it was analyzed back here, I guess by the White House and State Department, and they decided there would have to be a cut-out.

So, a foreign service officer was named as the head of the briefing section. I am not sure what the term was. He was appointed to the embassy staff under the Deputy Ambassador,

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given a little box there, and his assistant was the USIS officer who did the briefings, just as he had done before. But now he was seconded to the State Department.

Q: Was this part of the 5:00 o'clock follies?

HALL: Yes. I think it had been the 5:00 o'clock follies even before, but that is right. There was always a military briefing and a civilian briefing.

Q: So, the deputy to the then spokesman was a USIS officer and he was the one who did the briefing.

HALL: Who did the briefing and who continued to do the briefing — Gene Rosenfeld at that time.

Q: Oh, Gene, of course, yes.

HALL: Then he was succeeded by our Vatican expert, from the Herald Tribune, who wrote a book on the Supreme Court.

Q: McGurn?

HALL: Yes. He was succeeded by Barrett McGurn. Before him, there were several.

Q: Rappaport?

HALL: Rappaport was an assistant. There were more than one press assistant who was USIA people, but that was, in effect, outside of JUSPAO, except for administrative support.

Q: You said earlier that you received visits regularly from PAOs from other countries, I being one of them on a USIA program to acquaint PAOs from other countries with what we were doing in Vietnam. I came from Berlin at that time.

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That was an effort on USIA's part to get our own officers propagandized, so to speak, to be able to halfway intelligently try to explain our policies in their own home countries.

HALL: You remind me that after I was back in the Agency about 1970, maybe the middle of 1970, there was a PAO meeting held in Brussels for European PAOs, attended by Frank Shakespeare and by Frank Shakespeare's press spokesman, Frank Gavin. Do you remember Frank Gavin?

Q: Right.

HALL: Frank Gavin was a very — I was going to say right wing, but very conservative person, even more conservative, I think, than Frank Shakespeare.

Q: Which is difficult.

HALL: Exactly. During that meeting — oh, Bruce Herschensohn also attended that meeting and he was also very conservative.

Q: Oh, yes, I remember that.

HALL: At that meeting, Gavin was given the floor and he berated all those stalwart PAOs for their inability to convince the world — in this case, Western Europe — that our cause was just and that we were fighting the good war, to get them on as allies.

He went so far as to say, "I think when this is over, there should be an investigation, a Congressional or a high level investigation of you people to find out why you didn't do your job" or words to that effect.

Q: I remember that.

HALL: He almost implied a conspiracy.

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Q: I remember that. I came from Berlin. I was PAO in Berlin at that time. I was quite upset about that, I remember, because I remember I had spent three years in Moscow, two years in Sofia, and now had been in Berlin for two or three years, and I really felt that I knew what the program was.

HALL: Two of us denounced him at that meeting. I asked for the opportunity because I had been most recently in Saigon working there and after I was finished cutting him up, Pat Van Delden stood up and gave him hell.

Q: She was able to do that, yes.

HALL: She was a lovely woman.

Q: In 1972, you retired.

HALL: Right. At that time, I was bored with being head of research, which in a way is an impossible element. Henry Loomis refused to give me a field job, at least immediately, and I had the necessary twenty years to retire.

Q: Henry Loomis?

HALL: Right. I had twenty years and I was over fifty.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to contribute to this?

HALL: Well no. In the early days, I took part in much discussion about the way the agency was organized. I had barely arrived in Beirut when I had to entertain my area director and play host to a regional PAO meeting. Hunt Damon was the first area director for Near East, South Asia and Africa.

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I was brought into USIA from the field, really, and saw it for at least three years from the field perspective before I got back to Washington in 1956. I did visit very briefly in Washington in 1954.

I began to understand that power centered in the area director's office. When I got back I went into the area director's office as a desk officer and then as program officer.

I was a little chagrined to find that the media did have some degree of say-so in how things went, but I never quite got used to that idea.

Q: It has changed considerably since that time.

HALL: That's right.

Q: This is one of the things that I have observed, that currently — and I would say since the Reagan Administration came in — the associate directors for the various media services (Education and Cultural Affairs, Programs, Television) have become, so to speak, the predominant elements in USIA.

The area directors, as such, were, I would say, frankly, downgraded in their responsibilities and only the appointment then of a counselor of the agency who more or less was to represent the area directors in the front office mitigated that somewhat. I still feel somewhat uncomfortable, in retrospect, now looking at it from the outside, as you do, that the area directors and the PAOs in the field are the ones really that have the know-how and the feel and the sense of what we ought to be doing in the world.

HALL: Yes.

Q: Well, thanks very much, Larry.

HALL: I thank you.

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Q: *It has been very interesting and enlightening.*

End of interview